

MURKY GAMES



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THE DOLL

FOURTEEN

POEMS

BY PAUL ELUARD

TWO PHOTOS BY HANS BELLMER

English Variations by

Karl Orend



Salamanca Press, Toronto

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copies for friends of the translator. This translation
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I

Restraint, because anything you can say about her hems her in, constrains her. In the smallest detail of the narrowest field of vision, we calculate, niggle about, the location of her heart: Faith in childhood is re-evaluated.

II

In the children's cupboard there are enchanted lights, a loaded gun to terrorize us, a crystal-clear spring, a stone basin overflowing onto a bed of opals, a hunter without boots, a hairless girl, a sailor singing on a boat at sea, a damask stallion, a roving theatre, a cricket, white feathers shed from a nest of doves, heart-shaped baskets stuffed with pink cream, a guitar that makes sparks, and a dress that will never go out of style.

III

You never hear her talk about her homeland or her family. She fears a response from the void. Your kisses are destined for speechless lips.

Agile and delivered, this slight child-mother abjures the protection of walls - and paints the day after her own fashion. She scares children and animals. She makes cheeks lose their blush; and renders the grass more savagely green.

IV



What is ripped from us in places where birds no longer sing? What can we hope for in places where wheat cannot grow? What can this loveless world, bereft of the Sun, mean to us?

It had been bitterly cold, and we starved. Fear was within us, at home, and abroad in the world, blotting out everything else. Death, the final refuge of our imagination. A snake slithered under the house, which collapsed in ruins.

V

Puffing out her cheeks, greedily swallowing a flower, scenting her body from within. Her mouth is pink by necessity, even at the edge of the pitch-black forest.



VI

The night radiates in its own manner: Our eyes are led by the heart. The night negates the senses, our sole realm of purity.

VII

The thickset scarab emerges at midday. Round flames lick about this day of desolation like abandoned trades around poverty.

On his guard, the man forgets about his day, lowers his glance and surrenders. A shadow behind the drawn curtains - the earth overwhelms the hills, fills in the valleys, connects the bridges.

VIII

Certain insults unmask her, make her pitiful – or more desirable.

Well, so it goes: Farewell forever-hidden pebbles, serene as undiscovered gold. Despite this parting, the path passes between your shoulders, under a blackened procession of caresses. Everything remains at the tender moment of awakening, to encompass your shoulders once again. This trajectory precludes immobility.

IX

In the house with broken floorboards, with the fractured roof, the stairway carpeted with old shoes, she is thickset, unfathomable, and without pretention. In a word, she is alone. Alone in her cold misty frame; solitary and without eyes, unredeemably alone. It is elsewhere that pure air falls like lead on the foundations of a shared life.

X

Blood and dust, a dash of milk, one of spring water, ten needles at hand, rusted, in the folds of a pillowcase. A splash of grain in the barn, a drop of resin in the well, a measure of nothingness right here. The inside of sheets for a mirror. A bevy of clawed tigers, heavy ink flowers upon your lips. Nothing upon the earth.

XI

Winter, at five in the morning, she got up and, barely dressed, went to gather fallen wood. She could have died from the pity she felt for herself. Straw mixed with grain, smoke mixed with fire, pity polluted by evil.

XII

Lined with white satin, weighing on the shadows,
small head tinted with gold, wrapped in fear,
small head on her muzzle, subject to the play of
strong winds, in the milk of preceding days, star
on an uncracked egg, forgetting everything, tiny
voice, loud noise; she unravels the thread of her
flight. Nothing can hold her back.

XIII

It's a girl! Where are her eyes? She's a girl! Where
are her breasts? It's a girl! What does she say? It's
a girl! What is she playing at? She's a girl! She is
my boundless desire!

XIV

The open space contains breasts, a head on a thin neck, and a touch of light at the back of two eyes without secrets.

Afterword

The poems included in this chapbook, which were written in December 1938, have appeared in various guises under different titles in both French and English. The original edition appeared in 1939 as a supplement to the literary review *Messages*, as *Jeux Vagues La Poupée*, with two photographs. A second edition of the poems appeared under the title *Les Jeux de la Poupée*, with a dedication to Hans

Bellmer, as part of Eluard's volume *Le Livre Ouvert*. This contained revisions of the original text. The third edition, *Jeux de la Poupée*, in 1949, was based on the text of the second edition, but reinserted some material from the first edition which had been deleted. It also contained many more photographs. Bellmer's hand-coloured copies of this book have sold for over 60,000 euros.

Hans Bellmer wrote an introduction to his Doll Series in German, which was subsequently translated by Georges Hugnet, under the title *Notes au sujet de la*

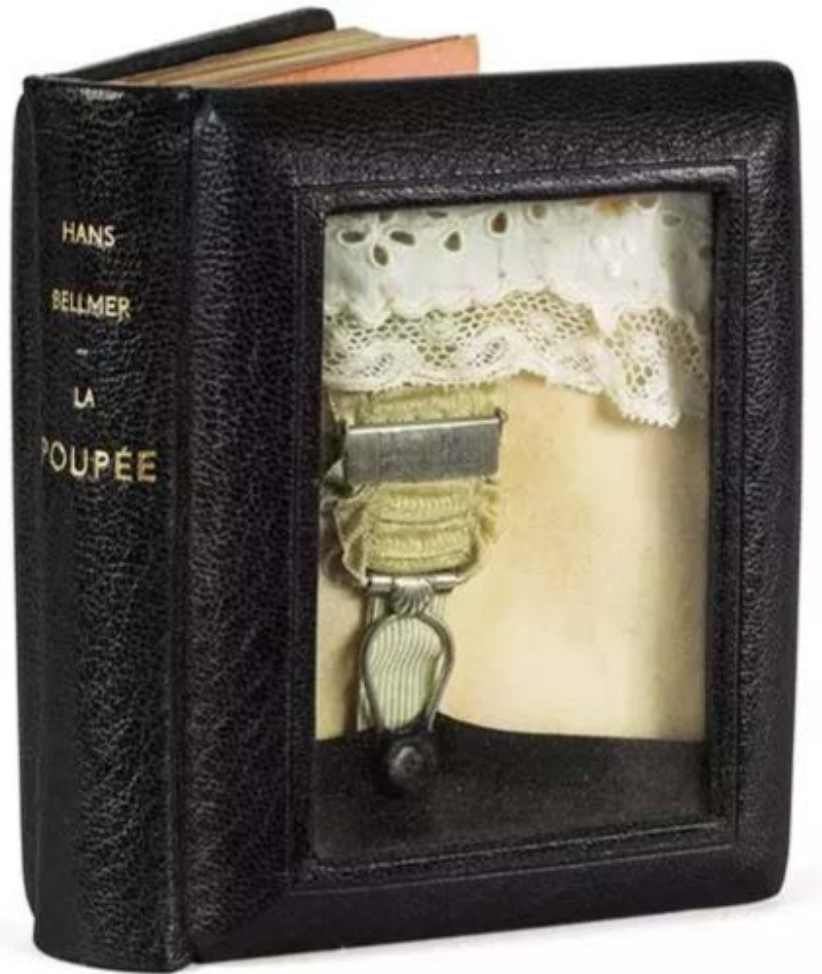
jointure à Boule, for publication in the catalogue for The International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1947. Bellmer, Hugnet and Louis Christy had first compiled a handful of maquettes for a book originally entitled *Les Jeux de la Poupée* in 1936-7, for which Bellmer supplied colourized photographs. From these, Hugnet only hand-crafted three Livre-Objets to be bound by Christy.

On December 31st 1935, Bellmer had offered Paul Eluard, as a gift, an early version of this project where the photographs remained in black and white.

Hugnet, unknown to anglophone readers, was an important figure in the French cultural sphere. He was a writer, poet, playwright, film maker, artist, the historian of the Dada movement, and a highly gifted creator of rare hand-made books. Hugnet was also an active member of the Resistance, translator of Gertrude Stein, and one of the founders of *Les Editions de Minuit*. He collaborated with some of the great artists of his time, including Picasso, Salvador Dali, Joan Miro, Yves Tanguy, and Hans Arp. Bellmer worked again with Georges Hugnet, when he produced illustrations for *Œillades ciselées en branche*

(Jeanne Bucher, Editeur 1939), which now sells at over 25,000 euros in its rarest state.

Paul Eluard, of all the Surrealists, was particularly enraptured by Hans Bellmer's Doll Series, which had gained its original inspiration from two dolls from the time of Dürer seen in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. Bellmer was influenced by Surrealist circles from the 1920s. He had initially paid to have some of his Doll work published in an ultra-rare hand-made portfolio by Eckstein publishers in Karlsruhe in 1934. This contained ten original photographs of his first Doll, and each copy of the book was assembled by hand. Less than fifty were made. It sells



for more than eighty thousand euros in the rare book market.

The current chapbook is a series of translation/variations based on the 1939 edition of Eluard's poems. Bellmer had previously published about his Doll work in *Poupée: variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée* in *Minotaure* (with 18 photos, in the issue of December 1934), and in *Cahiers d'Art* (1936). Arrested as a German citizen at the outbreak of World War II, he was interned at Camp des Milles near Aix-en-Provence along with Max Ernst, but eventually slipped

underground, while Ernst was spirited away to America, in 1941, by his lover (later wife) Peggy Guggenheim. In New York Ernst reunited with André Breton.

During his career, Bellmer illustrated major erotic works of literature that were widely banned, often in expensive editions intended for wealthy clients. He supplied engravings for Georges Bataille's *Histoire de l'oeil* and *Madame Edwarda*, Louis Aragon for *Le Con d'Irène*, and Pauline Réage for *Histoire d'O*. He also illustrated the works of de Sade and La Fontaine.

Some have seen Bellmer's Doll work from the 1930s as an attack on Nazi idealizations of the so-called "master race" and the physical perfection of the men and women that were said to epitomize Aryan racial superiority. Bellmer's work had been banned in Germany as "degenerate art."

Bellmer was heavily influenced in his creation of his original Doll by his passionate desire for his cousin Ursula Naguschewski, which began when she was sixteen; and by the doll "Olympia" in Jacques Offenbach's opera *The Tales of*

Hoffman. His Dolls show a young girl that has not yet reached maturity. His power to manipulate "her" was unlimited, sadistic, and erotically charged. It suggests child abuse, rape, and sexual violence. The pink cream of Eluard's poem refers to the colour Bellmer gave part of his Doll to imitate the colour of pre-pubescent skin, and to hymen-blood mixed with sperm. Bellmer was also aware of Oscar Kokoschka's commission of a life-like doll of his former mistress Alma Mahler, and Kokoschka's book *Der Fetisch* (1925). Bellmer was described in the 1938 *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* as a

“Surrealist writer, painter, and builder of large dolls.” The photos in this current chapbook are of his second important Doll, created in late 1935. They have been interpreted as showing the Doll in “the aftermath of torture or abuse.” Certain critics have seen these as not merely sadistic but also having a masochistic component:

“In his sadistic scenes Bellmer leaves behind masochistic traces; in his erotic manipulation of the dolls, he explores a sadistic impulse that is also self-destructive. In this way the dolls may go

inside sadistic mastery to the point where the subject confronts its greatest fear: its own fragmentation and disintegration.”¹

Rosalind Krauss sees this as an attempt:

“To produce the image of what one fears, in order to protect oneself from what one fears – this is the strategic achievement of anxiety, which arms the subject, in

¹ (Hal Foster, ‘Violation and Veiling in Surrealist Photography: Woman as Fetish, as Shattered Object, as Phallus’, in Jennifer Mundy (ed.), *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Modern, London 2001, pp.203-22.)

advance, against the onslaught of trauma, the blow that takes one by surprise.”²

Bellmer aimed:

“...to construct an artificial girl with anatomical possibilities ...capable of recreating the heights of passion, and even inventing new desires.”

He was influenced by the Japanese *iki-ningyo* tradition of doll making (“living dolls”), as well as Japanese erotic art, and

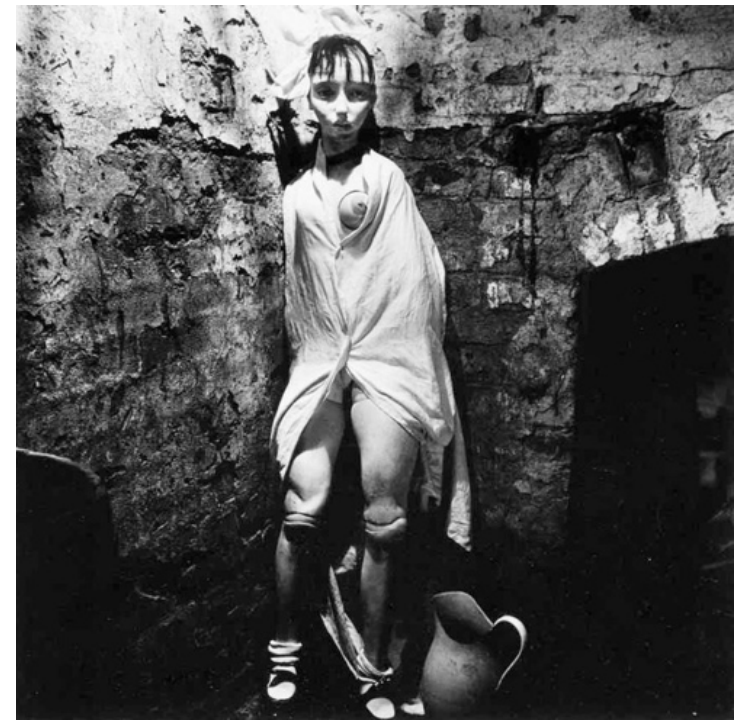
by the works of de Sade. Highly charged eroticism and explorations of sexuality were standard fare for those associated with the Surrealist movement, who saw de Sade as a precursor and central reference.

There is a sharp contrast between Paul Eluard’s most widely known use of the women he loved in his books such as *Easy* and *Time Overflows*, where Nusch Eluard resembles the perfect muse of a Troubadour, and Bellmer’s violence, which is much closer to Bataille.³

² Rosalind Krauss, ‘Uncanny’, in Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User’s Guide*, New York 1997, pp.192-197.

³ Paul Eluard *Easy/Facile* (2019) and *Time Overflows/ Le Temps Deborde* (2018) both translated by Karl Orend. Editions Carrefour Alyscamps, Toronto.

Nonetheless, there are links between this collaborative work and some of Eluard's earlier collaborations, notably *Repetitions*, with Max Ernst.⁴



Hans Bellmer's first Doll.

⁴ Paul Eluard/ Max Ernst *Repetitions* Translated by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno, Edited by Karl Orend, Editions Carrefour Alysamps 2019.



Hans Bellmer's obsession with manipulating and controlling a female body eventually led him to explorations of the bondage traditions of *kinbaku* and *shibari*, which later became more widely

known in the West through the work of Nobuyoshi Araki.

Bellmer's relationship with the German writer and artist Unica Zürn, whom he met in 1953, gave him a living canvass to work on. She allowed him to use her, and practice extreme bondage on her, to the point her body became, in her own words, "mutilated." They lived together at 88 rue Mouffetard in Paris, and collaborated on bondage photos, artworks, and books. Bellmer's photos of her trussed body were exhibited, and even used by André Breton for the cover of a Surrealist magazine.



First Doll, coloured by Bellmer.



Bellmer and Zürn with the Doll.



Zürn trussed by Bellmer.

Unica Zürn experimented with mind-altering drugs, notably mescaline, first taken with Henri Michaux, after which she experienced periods of mental illness (schizophrenia) and forced hospitalization in various clinics in France and Germany. She killed herself by defenestration, from the sixth-floor window of Bellmer's apartment, on October 18th 1970. Bellmer had previously suffered a stroke, which led to paralysis and the inability to speak; and so, was no longer able to care for her emotionally or financially. He wanted to break with her. Zürn could not live without him or take care of him in his

profoundly changed state. Hans Bellmer died on February 24th 1975, of cancer, after years of silence. He and Zürn are buried in a common grave, at Père Lachaise cemetery.

Unica Zürn is herself an important figure in both art and writing, though widely underestimated because of her closeness to Bellmer and the Surrealists, her willingness to let Bellmer take centre stage, and her unstable mental condition.⁵ Her

⁵ Esra Plumer, *Unica Zürn: Art, Writing and Post-War Surrealism*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016. Also, Valérie Duponchelle, « Unica Zürn, la poupée de Bellmer » *Le Figaro*, 7 mars 2020. Céline Wagner *La Trahison du Réel : Unica Zürn, Portrait d'une schizophrénie* La Boîte aux Bulles 2019.

novel *The Man of Jasmin* is based on Henri Michaux. Its full French title is : *L'Homme-Jasmin. Impressions d'une maladie mentale*. Her written work comprises eight volumes in the original German.⁶ Zürn's most powerful and disturbing work is *Dark Spring*, in which her suicide is prefigured by one of the characters. The idea itself partly originated in a statement by Bellmer about his own aesthetic vision written

⁶ *Œuvres complètes d'Unica Zürn*, (Gesammelte Werke 8 Bände), Berlin, Brinkman et Bose, 1988-1999. : *Lettres au Docteur Ferdière*, coécrit avec Hans Bellmer, Biarritz, Nouvelles éditions Séguier, 1994 : *MistAKE & autres écrits français*, Ypsilon éditeur, 2022. *Hexentexte (Grimoire de sorcière)*, with 10 drawings and 10 anagrams, Afterword by Hans Bellmer, Berlin, galerie Springer, 1954 : *The House of Illnesses*, translated by Malcolm Green, with drawings by Unica Zürn, London, Atlas Press, 1993. Unica Zürn *The Man of Jasmin* Atlas Press, London 2021. Unica Zürn *Dark Spring* Exact Change 1999.

around the time they had met. It was, he wrote:

“...a wish to conserve the tragic and precise trace of a naked falling body, from the window onto the sidewalk, as a strange object.”

Zürn identified with her father's first wife, Orla Holm, a failed writer (like Zürn's father), who committed suicide by throwing herself from an asylum window. Tragically, Zürn had been able to support herself well as a writer before she came

under Bellmer's influence and lived in his shadow.

From 1949-55 Unica Zürn had published over 150 short stories, written novels, and eight radio plays. Earlier she had been a successful writer in the Nazi film industry. She described *Dark Spring* as “the erotic life of a little girl based on my own childhood.” The main character talks of fantasies of being “tied up with rope that cut deep into her flesh.” The body and pain, rather than language, become central to communication between the protagonists. Zürn always expressed the

need for a strong father figure, which Bellmer in part fulfilled.

Bellmer obtusely and cruelly told Docteur Ferdière that Zürn exaggerated her insanity to appeal to Surrealist paradigms, and to be able to write about it. Ferdière was infamous as the doctor who had been charged with the treatment of Antonin Artaud, which Artaud experienced as a form of torture.⁷ Although her relationship with Bellmer allowed Zürn to frequent major artistic and literary circles,

⁷ Christopher Sawyer Laçanno *Dix Méditations sur quelques mots d'Antonin Artaud* translated by Patricia Pruitt. Edited by Karl Orend, Alyscamps Press 2018.

there is much evidence that she was very lonely. She feared rejection, and in each of her major novels it is rejection by the male that precipitates a female demise. Both Zürn and Bellmer carried with them enormous trauma, which drove the extremity of their work. Pleasure was inseparable from suffering.⁸

Paul Eluard was fascinated by the collaboration of poets with artists, photographers, and typographers/book

⁸ Peter Webb *Death, Desire & the Doll* University of Chicago Press 2008. Yuichi Konno *Secret Doll Underground* Sinbaku Publisher 2014. Hans Bellmer *The Doll Atlas* Press 2005. Hans Bellmer *Petite Anatomie de l'Image* Editions Allia 2022.

designers, as evidenced by a long list of books in which his poems appeared alongside paintings, etchings, drawings, photographs, lithographs, gouaches, and collages. Many of his major works were, in a very particular sense, collaborative.

Eluard wrote :

« Pour collaborer, peintres et poètes se veulent libres. La dépendance abaisse, empêche de comprendre, d'aimer. Il n'y a pas de modèle pour qui cherche ce qu'il n'a jamais vu. A la fin, rien n'est aussi beau qu'une ressemblance involontaire. »





Doll variations by Bellmer.

Paul Eluard's finest collaboration was arguably the two books of poems he completed featuring his wife Nusch, with photos by Man Ray and Dora Maar, designed and published by Guy Levis Mano and Christian Zervos.⁹ There are also his major collaborations with Max Ernst, Dali, Man Ray, Picasso, Valentine Hugo, René Magritte, and others. Of particular interest is his work with Man Ray, *Les Mains libres*, in which a section is devoted to de Sade. The title refers to the fact that poet and artist each had a free hand in the execution of their work. His collaboration with

⁹ *Facile et Le Temps Deborde.*

Hans Bellmer was classed as “poésie expérimentale,” and fell easily into the Surrealists’ favourite category of provocation. While Eluard’s poetry usually showed little of the “extreme perversion” associated with Bellmer, Eluard was by nature a sexual voyeur, and enjoyed watching his wife Nusch have sex with other men, including Man Ray. Man Ray himself had already created provocative photos of sadistic fetishist acts where women were tightly bound prior to 1930. Some of his work used live women, and some mannikins. The latter were an obsession for photographers,

including Man Ray’s friend Eugène Atget, and later Louis Stettner. The collaborative work *1929*, by Aragon, Péret, and Man Ray also echoes de Sade.¹⁰

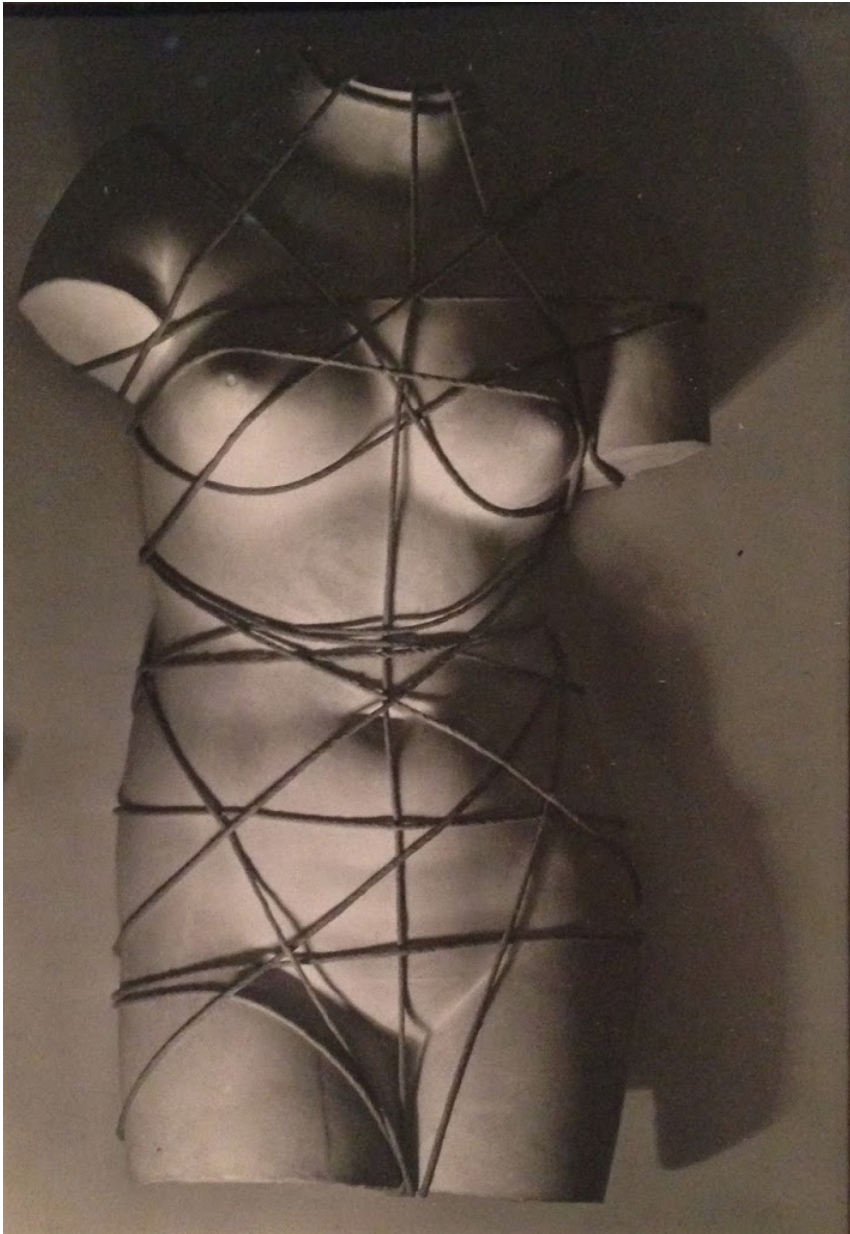
¹⁰ Aragon, Péret, Man Ray *1929* Translated by Zoltan Lizot-Picon, Edited by Karl Orend Editions Carrefour Alyscamps, Toronto 2019.



Man Ray bondage photo, 1930.



Man Ray bondage photos, early 1930s.



In the Eluard Ernst collaboration *Repetitions* (1922) there are already references to incest, predation upon virginity, erotic Japanese art, and torture. Ernst sometimes created works that showed women as sexual objects or machines, totally dominated by men for the purposes of sex and sadistic practices – such as his painting *La Femme Chancellante*. Eluard had shared his first wife Gala with Max Ernst for a time, before losing her to Salvador Dali.

Eluard's finest love poems make the women written about objects of worship,

almost sacred. His poems published here alongside Bellmer's images are not texts to accompany illustrations, but rather meditations on themes and visions that revisit his passion for de Sade. In his mind they are a paradigm of absolute liberty, of freeing desire from its object, and anti-clerical; a rebellion against all constraint in favour of the supremacy of the individual. Although a more extensive collaboration between the two men, with many more photos, exists in a later version of this work, the current chapbook provides the opportunity to best appreciate the power of Paul Eluard's poetic imagination in our

current time, when controversial images and political correctness have come to dominate discourse. The world in which Eluard and Bellmer created this collaboration no longer exists.

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